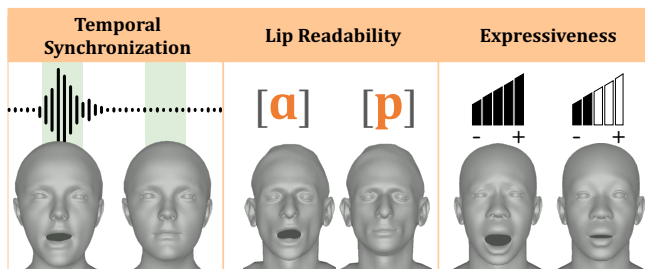


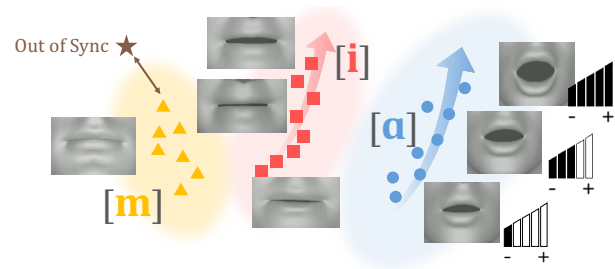
Perceptually Accurate 3D Talking Head Generation: New Definitions, Speech-Mesh Representation, and Evaluation Metrics

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(a) Essential Criteria for Perceptually Accurate 3D Talking Head



(b) Conceptual Diagram of Desired Representation Space

Figure 1. What defines perceptually accurate lip movement for a speech signal? In this work, we define three criteria to assess perceptual alignment between speech and lip movements of 3D talking heads: Temporal Synchronization, Lip Readability, and Expressiveness (a). The motivational hypothesis is the existence of a desirable representation space that models and complies well with the three criteria between diverse speech characteristics and 3D facial movements, as illustrated in (b); where representations with the same phonemes are clustered, are sensitive to temporal synchronization, and follow a certain pattern as the speech intensity increases. Consequently, we build a rich speech-mesh synchronized representation space that exhibits the desirable properties.

Abstract

Recent advancements in speech-driven 3D talking head generation have made significant progress in lip synchronization. However, existing models still struggle to capture the perceptual alignment between varying speech characteristics and corresponding lip movements. In this work, we claim that three criteria—Temporal Synchronization, Lip Readability, and Expressiveness—are crucial for achieving perceptually accurate lip movements. Motivated by our hypothesis that a desirable representation space exists to meet these three criteria, we introduce a speech-mesh synchronized representation that captures intricate correspondences between speech signals and 3D face meshes. We found that our learned representation exhibits desirable characteristics, and we plug it into existing models as a perceptual loss to better align lip movements to the given speech. In addition, we utilize this representation as a perceptual metric and introduce two other physically grounded lip synchronization metrics to assess how well the generated 3D talking heads align with these three criteria. Experiments show that training 3D talking head generation models with our perceptual loss

significantly improve all three aspects of perceptually accurate lip synchronization. Codes and datasets are available at <https://perceptual-3d-talking-head.github.io/>.

1. Introduction

Speech-driven 3D talking head generation focuses on generating 3D facial movements synchronized with input speech signals. This plays a key role in enhancing communication within multimedia applications, such as virtual reality, entertainment, and education [39]. To provide users with a more realistic and immersive experience, it is crucial that the facial and lip movements of 3D avatars are synchronized with the various aspects of speech. This synchronization should be perceptually accurate from a human perspective, ensuring that the avatars' expressions are both natural and convincing.

While recent works in learning-based 3D talking head generation [8, 9, 21, 27, 33, 46] aim to enhance the lip synchronization capabilities, they commonly rely on minimizing the Mean Squared Error (MSE) loss between generated 3D facial motion and ground truth motion as a learning objective. This approach is practical, as it directly contributes to minimizing the Lip Vertex Error (LVE), a commonly used

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metric that measures the MSE between the lip vertices of generated 3D facial motions and the ground truth.

Despite the improvements in the LVE metric, existing models still struggle to correlate lip movements with some speech characteristics, such as wider mouth openings as speech volume increases. These characteristics are not adequately captured by existing datasets [8, 12], which have limited ranges of facial motion patterns due to the small dataset scale and restricted intensity range. Moreover, relying on MSE and LVE is insufficient for learning or assessing perceptually plausible lip motions [21, 37], as it focuses solely on vertex-wise geometric differences and overlooks the true correspondence between the speech signals and lip movements. A lower MSE and LVE do not necessarily correspond to a more perceptually accurate lip movement.

These observations raise critical questions: *What defines perceptually accurate lip movement in response to a speech signal, and how can we enhance this accuracy?* We draw inspiration from findings on human audio-visual perception: 1) Humans are sensitive to temporal asynchrony between speech and lip movements; slight discrepancies can disrupt the perception of natural synchronization [43]. 2) Humans rely on accurate viseme-phoneme correspondence when assessing lip-sync accuracy, expecting visual lip movements to match the spoken phonemes [3]. 3) There is a proportional increase in jaw and lip movements as speech intensity increases, contributing to the expressiveness perceived in natural speech [18, 28, 34, 40]. Through our human study, we reveal an intriguing finding: participants favor lip movements with intensity that corresponds to speech—even if they exceed the established maximum acceptable asynchrony [43] by twice—over those that are perfectly synchronized but lack expressive alignment (Table 1-[Right]). This reveals that humans are more sensitive to expressiveness than temporal synchronization when perceiving, highlighting the importance of expressiveness. Building upon these insights, we define three criteria that significantly impact the perceptual lip synchronization of 3D talking heads: *Temporal Synchronization*, *Lip Readability*, and *Expressiveness* (Fig. 1 (a)).

Motivated by our hypothesis that a desirable representation space exists to meet these three criteria, we propose a speech-mesh synchronized and rich representation that captures the intricate correspondence between speech and 3D face mesh. We design a transformer-based architecture that maps time-sequenced speech and mesh inputs to a shared representation space. To effectively train this system, we employ a two-stage training method: we first develop a robust audio-visual speech representation using a large-scale 2D video dataset [1], which then serves as an anchor for learning a speech-mesh representation. We found that the first step is important and leads to emergent desirable properties (illustrated in Fig. 1 (b)) in the final representation. This sequential approach ensures that the model first establishes

a space that captures a wide range of speech characteristics, and then extends to explore the relationships between speech and 3D face mesh across diverse speech intensities and facial movements. Adopting this representation, we introduce a plug-and-play perceptual loss adaptable to any existing 3D talking head generation models [11, 21, 46], enhancing the perceptual quality of 3D talking heads.

Furthermore, to assess the three criteria, we introduce three metrics for each aspect. We leverage our learned representation as a perceptual metric, Perceptual Lip Readability Score (PLRS), to evaluate the perceptual lip readability of lip movements. Also, we propose two physically grounded lip synchronization metrics: Mean Temporal Misalignment (MTM) for temporal synchronization and Speech-Lip Intensity Correlation Coefficient (SLCC) for expressiveness.

Extensive experiments demonstrate that our perceptual loss significantly enhances all three aspects: Temporal Synchronization, Lip Readability, and Expressiveness, which are demonstrated across various metrics: existing metric, our newly proposed metrics, and human evaluations. We also find that incorporating an additional pseudo-dataset [45], which captures diverse ranges of speech and lip movement intensities, can further improve expressiveness. Our main contributions are summarized as follows:

- Defining three aspects—Temporal Synchronization, Lip Readability, and Expressiveness—that affect the perceptual quality of 3D talking heads and proposing three evaluation metrics for these aspects.
- Constructing a speech-mesh representation space that captures rich and diverse correspondences between speech and lip movements.
- Proposing a plug-in perceptual loss using the constructed speech-mesh representation and demonstrating improvements on existing metric, our newly proposed metrics, and human evaluations.

2. Related Work

Speech-driven 3D talking head generation. Speech-driven 3D talking head generation aims to generate realistic 3D facial movements aligned with given speech. Among recent data-driven methods [8, 9, 11, 21, 22, 33, 46, 47], FaceFormer [11] introduces a transformer-based autoregressive model and leverages a pre-trained speech model to capture long-term audio context and past facial movements. CodeTalker [46] employs a VQ-VAE to construct a discrete facial motion space, addressing the over-smoothing problem. Diffusion models [17, 31] have also been demonstrated to be effective for 3D talking head generation [33, 36]. In addition to synthesizing neutral facial motions, several works extend the 3D talking head to express specific aspects, such as emotional expressions [9, 22], multilingual capabilities [37], or laughter [38]. Despite these advances, existing methods rely

on minimizing MSE loss without a clear definition of perceptually accurate lip movement, overlooking the multifaceted nature of lip synchronization. To address this, we define three critical aspects of lip synchronization and propose rich speech-mesh representation, along with its application as a perceptual loss in a plug-and-play manner, enhancing all three aspects of lip synchronization quality in existing 3D talking head generation models [11, 21, 46].

Speech-face representation learning. Well-aligned representation spaces learned from large-scale datasets such as CLIP [24] and ImageBind [14] are valued for their scalability and versatility. These spaces enable a wide range of applications, including auxiliary loss [42], intermediate representation [41], and evaluation metrics [16]. With this context, audio-visual representation spaces trained specifically on speech and 2D face videos have been proposed [6, 15, 29, 35]. For instance, SyncNet [6], a CNN-based model learns to detect audio-visual temporal synchronization and has been applied to several tasks, such as active speaker detection [1, 7] and 2D talking head generation [23, 44, 48]. Similarly, a transformer-based AV-HuBERT [29] has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in various tasks, including lip reading [30], audio-visual translation [5], and 2D talking head generation [44]. While there has been significant progress in the 2D domain, advancements in the 3D domain remain under-explored. Yang *et al.* [47] extends the SyncNet architecture to accommodate speech and 3D face meshes; however, its application is limited to evaluating 3D talking heads. In this work, we demonstrate the versatility of our representation space as a plug-in module to improve the perceptual accuracy of the existing speech-driven 3D talking head generation models [11, 21, 46], as well as to assess their performance.

Evaluation metrics for speech-driven 3D talking head. The prevalent evaluation metric, Lip Vertex Error (LVE) [27], measures the L2 distance between predicted lip vertices and ground truth. Additional metrics, such as Upper Face Dynamics Deviation (FDD) [46] and Lip Readability Percentage (LRP) [21], consider different regions of facial motion. These metrics, however, focus on vertex-wise geometric differences between the ground-truth 3D facial motions and neglect speech-related information. To incorporate both speech and 3D face mesh data for evaluation, MultiTalk [37] introduces an Audio-Visual Lip Readability (AVLR) metric, which assesses perceptual accuracy of lip readability using a pre-trained Audio-Visual Speech Recognition model [2]. Yet, AVLR relies on speech and 2D face video rendered from the 3D face mesh, which may not align with the 3D talking head domain. To address these limitations, we introduce novel and comprehensive evaluation metrics that focus on diverse aspects of lip synchronization: Mean Temporal Misalignment (MTM), Perceptual Lip Readability Score (PLRS), and Speech-Lip Intensity Correlation Coefficient (SLCC).

3. Essential Criteria for Perceptually Accurate 3D Talking Head

Generating a 3D talking head with lip movements that are perceptually accurate to human observers requires a clear understanding of the components that influence perceptual quality. Although existing works have focused on improving partial aspects of these talking head generation models, a comprehensive exploration for establishing a perceptually accurate 3D talking head model has barely been undertaken. Drawing inspirations from extensive research in existing works [10, 18, 21, 28, 34, 40, 43, 44] and our studies, we identify three fundamental criteria essential for achieving perceptually accurate lip movements in 3D talking heads.

Temporal Synchronization. This alignment is particularly crucial in media involving human speech, where viewers expect lip movements to precisely match the corresponding speech in time. Temporal misalignment between speech and lip movements indeed distracts viewers, reduces user experiences, and negatively impacts audience perception [25]. Vatakis *et al.* [43] find that viewers are particularly sensitive to speech-lip asynchrony compared to other audio-visual asynchrony, such as music. They note that mismatches become noticeable when speech precedes lip movements by more than 50 ms or follows them by more than 220 ms. These findings may hold the same in 3D talking head generation, where any misalignment between speech and lip movements can break the illusion of realism, leading to a diminished user experience and reducing the perceived authenticity of the virtual character. Thus, we define the temporal synchronization of the talking head as an important aspect of lip synchronization quality.

Lip Readability. Visemes (or lip movements) must correspond accurately to the speech phonemes to ensure the spoken words are visually intelligible [3]. This aspect is widely acknowledged as important in existing literature in both 2D [44] and 3D [10, 21] speech-driven talking head models, which leverage lip reading experts as an auxiliary guidance to improve the visual intelligibility of the spoken word. However, the mapping between speech and lip movements is not one-to-one, making lip readability challenging to define. For example, the size and shape of the opening mouth and the dynamic movement patterns of the lips in response to specific utterance differ at every moment [47] or per individual [32]. To capture this complexity, we define the lip readability within speech-mesh synchronized representation space learned from a large-scale dataset, capturing the comprehensive and nuanced correspondence between speech and lip movements.

Expressiveness. Speech conveys not only linguistic content but also varies in intensity. For instance, a speaker may express the same text softly or loudly, with jaw and lip movements proportionally increasing as speech intensity rises,

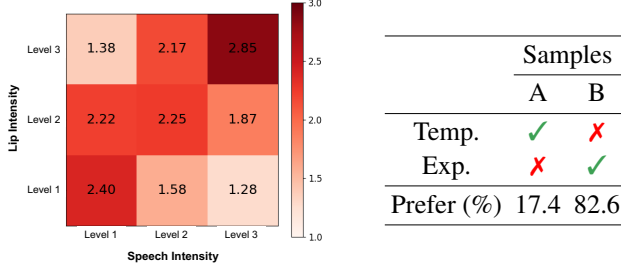


Table 1. Human studies on alignment criteria. [Left] Preference scores (1-3) for 3D talking heads with varying lip movement intensities paired with different speech intensities. [Right] Human preference between (A) samples with precise timing but low expressiveness, and (B) samples with high expressiveness but 100ms asynchrony—twice the commonly accepted 50ms threshold [43].

which contributes to perceived expressiveness in real-world face recognition [18, 28, 40]. To demonstrate that the positive correlation of human preference between the intensity of speech and lip movements also exists in 3D talking head field, we conduct a human study by presenting 3D talking heads with varied lip movement intensities paired with different speech intensities in Table 1-[Left]. Participants prefer the lip movements with the intensity that match the intensity of speech. Despite this distinct human preference for synchronization between the intensity of corresponding speech and lip movements, this aspect has barely been explored in the talking head generation field. We thus define the expressiveness in 3D talking head as the correlation between speech and lip movement intensity, which is crucial for establishing genuine talking heads and is expected to guide future research aimed at improving perceptual lip synchronization.

Focus of this work. Among the three criteria for perceptually accurate 3D talking head, we find that recent 3D talking head generation models achieve reasonable temporal alignment between speech and lip movements (see supplementary for a visualization of temporal synchronization). Furthermore, we design an A vs. B test, prompting participants to choose between two samples: (A) temporally synchronized one while lacking expressive synchronization, and (B) the other with expressive synchronization but with 100ms asynchrony. Table 1-[Right] shows that users prefer sample B, suggesting that humans may prioritize expressive synchronization over strict temporal alignment. This insight directs our focus toward enhancing all three aspects to better capture perceptual realism in 3D talking head. Details of the human study are in the supplementary material. Before introducing metrics to assess the criteria, we present our synchronized representation for designing our perceptual loss.

4. Speech-Mesh Synchronized Representation

We hypothesize that a desirable representation space exists to meet the three criteria defined in Sec. 3. Motivated by this

hypothesis, we develop a rich speech-mesh synchronized representation which captures the intricate correspondence between speech and the 3D face mesh. We found that our learned representation exhibits desirable properties, and we adopt it as a perceptual loss to improve the perceptual accuracy of existing models with respect to these three criteria.

Overview. Directly learning a synchronized speech-mesh representation presents challenges due to the scarcity of speech-3D face mesh datasets. One potential solution is to construct pseudo-GT 3D face meshes using reconstruction models [13], although relying solely on pseudo-GT may not suffice for building a robust representation. To overcome this, we leverage the extensive knowledge from the speech-2D lip video representations and adapt this to accommodate 3D face meshes. Specifically, we propose a two-stage training process: in stage 1, we learn an audio-visual speech representation that accurately reflects lip movements from the unlabeled in-the-wild 2D synchronized talking face video dataset, LRS3 [1]. Subsequently, we leverage the pre-trained speech representation from stage 1, using it as the anchor space to learn a synchronized speech-mesh representation.

Stage 1. Learning audio-visual speech representation.

This stage aims to learn a rich speech-2D lip video representation that effectively captures the correlation between varying speech characteristics and lip dynamics. Motivated by prior works [15, 35], we extend the integration of masked autoencoder (MAE) and cross-modal contrastive learning to learn a synchronized speech-2D lip video representation using 2D videos. The architecture for stage 1 consists of two modality-specific encoders, a cross-modal fusion encoder, and two modality-specific decoders. (see Fig. 2-[Stage 1]).

Given a speech and 2D lip video pair, $(\mathbf{X}_s, \mathbf{X}_v) \in D$, we begin by patchifying and tokenizing speech spectrograms and video frames into speech and video tokens as $\mathbf{S} = (\mathbf{s}_1, \dots, \mathbf{s}_N)$ and $\mathbf{V} = (\mathbf{v}_1, \dots, \mathbf{v}_M)$, where $\mathbf{s}_i, \mathbf{v}_j \in \mathbb{R}^H$. We then randomly mask out $P\%$ portion of tokens. The remaining unmasked speech tokens $\mathbf{S}^{unmask}$ and video tokens $\mathbf{V}^{unmask}$ are respectively fed into the speech encoder E_s and video encoder E_v , each consisting of N_e transformer layers. Each encoder extracts uni-modal embeddings, $\mathbf{Z}_s^l = E_s^l(\mathbf{S}^{unmask})$ and $\mathbf{Z}_v^l = E_v^l(\mathbf{V}^{unmask})$, where $l \in (1, \dots, N_e)$ denote the layer indices. Also, the mean pooled speech and video embeddings, $\mathbf{c}_s^l = \text{MeanPool}(\mathbf{Z}_s^l)$ and $\mathbf{c}_v^l = \text{MeanPool}(\mathbf{Z}_v^l)$, are derived from the corresponding uni-modal embeddings. Following the uni-modal encoders, we introduce a multi-modal fusion encoder E_{sv} to exploit complementary information from each extracted uni-modal embedding. The speech and video embeddings are jointly processed through this encoder, resulting in multi-modal fusion embeddings $\mathbf{F}_s$ and $\mathbf{F}_v$, i.e., $[\mathbf{F}_s, \mathbf{F}_v] = E_{sv}([\mathbf{Z}_s, \mathbf{Z}_v])$, where $[\cdot]$ denotes concatenation. With the fusion embeddings $\mathbf{F}_s$ and $\mathbf{F}_v$, we utilize each modality’s decoder to reconstruct the original signals. Specifically, we employ a

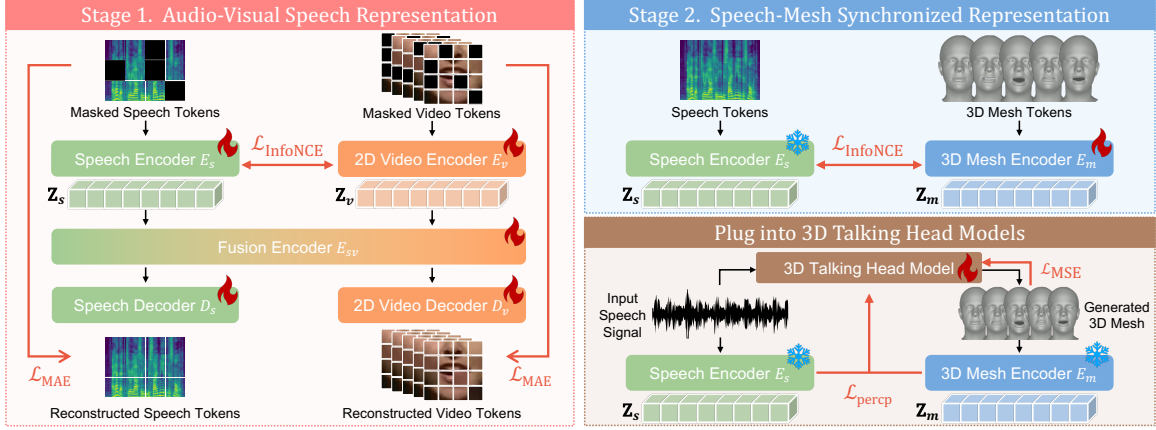


Figure 2. Pipeline of speech-mesh synchronized representation learning. We train our speech-mesh representation space in a two-stage manner. In the first stage, we learn a rich audio-visual representation in 2D domain to capture the synchronization between lip movement and speech. In the second stage, we train the 3D mesh encoder to align the 3D mesh space with the frozen speech space. As an application of our speech-mesh representation space, we propose a plug-in perceptual loss to 3D talking head models to enhance the quality of lip movements.

speech decoder D_s and a video decoder D_v , each consisting of N_d transformer layers. We pad each multi-modal fusion embedding with trainable masked tokens at their original positions, resulting in $\mathbf{F}'_s$ and $\mathbf{F}'_v$. Each decoder then reconstructs the respective signals; the reconstructed speech spectrogram and video tokens as $\hat{\mathbf{S}}^{mask} = D_s(\mathbf{F}'_s)$ and $\hat{\mathbf{V}}^{mask} = D_v(\mathbf{F}'_v)$.

Training the model involves two objectives: learning the cross-modal alignment between the speech-2D lip video signals, while reconstructing their original signals. Given B speech-2D lip video token pairs in a batch, $\{\mathbf{S}_i, \mathbf{V}_i\}_{i=1}^B$, we treat the true speech-2D lip video pair as positive samples, while the others in the batch are considered negative samples. To encourage alignment between temporally synchronized speech-2D lip video instances, we utilize a cross-modal contrastive learning strategy, InfoNCE [20]. We maximize the cosine similarity between positive sample of the mean pooled speech embedding $\mathbf{c}_{s,i}^l = \text{MeanPool}(E_s^l(\mathbf{S}_i^{unmask}))$ and the corresponding synchronized mean pooled video embedding $\mathbf{c}_{v,i}^l = \text{MeanPool}(E_v^l(\mathbf{V}_i^{unmask}))$. We first define the speech-centric loss as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{S \rightarrow V} = -\frac{1}{B} \sum_{i=1}^B \log \frac{\exp(\mathbf{c}_{s,i}^l \cdot \mathbf{c}_{v,i}^l / \tau)}{\sum_{j=1}^B \exp(\mathbf{c}_{s,i}^l \cdot \mathbf{c}_{v,j}^l / \tau)}, \quad (1)$$

where τ is a temperature hyperparameter. Also, we make the objective symmetric by defining a video-centric loss as $\mathcal{L}_{V \rightarrow S}$. We sum $\mathcal{L}_{S \rightarrow V}$ and $\mathcal{L}_{V \rightarrow S}$ across L selected encoder layers to obtain our final contrastive learning objective:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{InfoNCE}} = \sum_{l \in L} \mathcal{L}_{S \rightarrow V} + \mathcal{L}_{V \rightarrow S}. \quad (2)$$

For reconstruction, the model is trained in a self-supervised manner by minimizing the reconstruction loss $\mathcal{L}_{\text{MAE}}$ as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{MAE}} = \frac{1}{B} \sum_{i=1}^B \left[\frac{\|\hat{\mathbf{S}}_i^{mask} - \mathbf{S}_i^{mask}\|_F^2}{|\mathbf{S}_i^{mask}|} + \frac{\|\hat{\mathbf{V}}_i^{mask} - \mathbf{V}_i^{mask}\|_F^2}{|\mathbf{V}_i^{mask}|} \right], \quad (3)$$

where $|\mathbf{S}_i^{mask}|$ and $|\mathbf{V}_i^{mask}|$ denote the number of masked speech and video tokens, respectively. Overall, our objective function is defined as:

$$\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{MAE}} + \lambda \mathcal{L}_{\text{InfoNCE}}, \quad (4)$$

where λ is the weight factor for cross-modal contrastive loss.

We observe that the representation space trained with the transformer architecture and a rich and large-scale 2D face video dataset in this way already possesses the desired properties we pursue, illustrated in Fig. 1 (see supplementary for visualizations of pre-trained speech representation). Motivated by this, we transfer these emergent properties to the speech-mesh representation space as follows.

Stage 2. Learning speech-mesh representation. In this stage, we design a 3D mesh encoder that maps 3D face mesh to the speech representation pre-trained in stage 1. This pre-trained speech representation, derived from rich speech-2D face video data, serves as a robust anchor space for learning the correlation between diverse speech characteristics and 3D facial motions. We use contrastive learning loss to align 3D facial motion embeddings with the anchored speech representations, as shown in Fig. 2-[Stage 2].

Given a speech and 3D face mesh pair $(\mathbf{X}_s, \mathbf{X}_m) \in D$, we patchify and tokenize speech spectrograms into speech tokens $\mathbf{S}$, and map these into pre-trained uni-modal mean pooled speech embeddings $\mathbf{c}_s^l = \text{MeanPool}(E_s^l(\mathbf{S}))$. Similarly, we patchify 3D face mesh into mesh tokens $\mathbf{M}$, and feed them into the 3D mesh encoder E_m consisting of N_e transformer layers to extract mesh embeddings $\mathbf{Z}_m^l = E_m^l(\mathbf{M})$ and the corresponding mean-pooled mesh embedding $\mathbf{c}_m^l$. For the learning objective, given B speech-3D face mesh token pairs in a batch, $\{\mathbf{S}_i, \mathbf{M}_i\}_{i=1}^B$, we first define speech-anchored loss as:

$$\mathcal{L}_{S \rightarrow M} = -\frac{1}{B} \sum_{i=1}^B \log \frac{\exp(\mathbf{c}_{s,i}^l \cdot \mathbf{c}_{m,i}^l / \tau)}{\sum_{j=1}^B \exp(\mathbf{c}_{s,i}^l \cdot \mathbf{c}_{m,j}^l / \tau)}, \quad (5)$$

as well as $\mathcal{L}_{M \rightarrow S}$ which is the mesh-anchored loss. Similar to Eq. (2), we sum $\mathcal{L}_{S \rightarrow M}$ and $\mathcal{L}_{M \rightarrow S}$ across L selected encoder layers to train the 3D mesh encoder E_m while the speech encoder fixed. As a result, this two-stage training approach yields a robust speech-mesh representation, which significantly enhances the alignment between the speech and 3D face mesh modalities.

Adopting it as a perceptual loss. A key application of the speech-mesh representation learned through the two-stage training process is its use as a perceptual loss to enhance the perceptual accuracy of the 3D talking head model (see Fig. 2). Leveraging this representation as a perceptual loss ensures that the generated lip movements are perceptually accurate and aligned well with the speech.

Given B speech and generated 3D face mesh pairs in a batch, $\{\mathbf{S}_i, \hat{\mathbf{M}}_i\}_{i=1}^B$, we define our perceptual loss with the symmetric InfoNCE loss (Eq. (2)) as

$$\mathcal{L}_{percp} = \sum_{l \in L} \mathcal{L}_{S \rightarrow M} + \mathcal{L}_{M \rightarrow S}. \quad (6)$$

Our perceptual loss encourages synchronized speech and mesh embeddings to pull closer together, while unsynchronized ones to push apart. The effectiveness and analysis of our perceptual loss will be discussed in later sections.

5. Evaluation Metrics

In this section, we describe our proposed evaluation metrics that assess each criterion impacting the quality of 3D lip accuracy, as discussed in Sec. 3. Here, we outline the high-level concepts of our proposed metrics. Additional details and experiments are provided in the supplementary material.

Mean Temporal Misalignment (MTM). To measure the temporal discrepancy between speech and corresponding lip movements, temporal correspondence annotations, such as onset times for each modality, would typically be required. As a proxy, we determine temporal correspondence and measure temporal discrepancies between the ground truth and predicted lip vertex displacement sequences by using Derivative Dynamic Time Warping (DDTW) [19], which robustly identifies local structural similarities compared to standard Dynamic Time Warping (DTW) [4]. For simplicity, we focus on the central vertices of the upper and lower lips when extracting displacement sequences, and use local extrema in the DDTW process to measure temporal misalignment by pinpointing precise time steps for mouth opening and closing events. Consequently, Mean Temporal Misalignment (MTM) $\overline{\Delta t}$ is defined as $\overline{\Delta t} = \frac{1}{K} \sum_{k=1}^K \Delta t_k$, where K is the total number of video clips and Δt_k is the averaged temporal misalignment of the k -th video clip.

Perceptual Lip Readability Score (PLRS). While Lip Vertex Error (LVE) measures the accuracy of generated lip articulations against the ground truth, it does not fully assess

whether lip movements are perceptually aligned with the given speech. To address this, we leverage our speech-mesh representation in Sec. 4 as a perceptual lip readability evaluator. We compute the perceptual alignment using the cosine similarity of the mean pooled speech and mesh embeddings. Since this representation has learned a rich distribution of speech correspondences across various facial movements, our metric correlates highly with human perception, measuring perceptual lip movement alignment more accurately than LVE (see supplementary for the human study on metrics).

Speech and Lip Intensity Correlation Coefficient (SLCC).

As shown in Table 1-[Left], humans prefer aligned intensity between speech and lip movement. Thus, the intensity of generated lip movements should positively correlate with the corresponding input speech. To quantify this, we define the Speech and Lip Correlation Coefficient r_{SL} as:

$$r_{SL} = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^K (\mathbf{SI}_k - \bar{\mathbf{SI}})(\mathbf{LI}_k - \bar{\mathbf{LI}})}{\sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^K (\mathbf{SI}_k - \bar{\mathbf{SI}})^2} \sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^K (\mathbf{LI}_k - \bar{\mathbf{LI}})^2}}, \quad (7)$$

where $\mathbf{SI}_k$ and $\mathbf{LI}_k$ denote Speech (SI) and Lip Intensity (LI), respectively, $\bar{\mathbf{SI}} = \frac{1}{K} \sum_{k=1}^K \mathbf{SI}_k$ and $\bar{\mathbf{LI}} = \frac{1}{K} \sum_{k=1}^K \mathbf{LI}_k$. We define SI using speech loudness, specifically the z-normalized Root Mean Square (RMS) value, which is a widely accepted measure of speech intensity in signal processing. To define LI, we measure the averaged lip displacement value of a video clip, followed by the z-normalization.

6. Experiments

We first outline the evaluation setup, and then present thorough analyses of the experimental results. Due to the space limitation, we present more implementation details and additional experiments in the supplementary material.

6.1. Experimental Settings

Datasets. Most of the existing speech-driven 3D talking head generation methods rely on VOCASET [8] and BIWI [12] to train and test the models. However, these datasets have limited ranges of facial motion patterns due to the small dataset scale and restricted intensity range, which restricts their ability to fully capture the intricate relationship between speech and 3D face mesh. To address the lack of training dataset, we construct two large-scale speech-3d face mesh benchmark datasets, LRS3-3D and MEAD-3D, by processing LRS3 and MEAD videos using two monocular face reconstruction methods: SPECTRE [13] for LRS3 [1], which ensures accurate lip movements, and SMIRK [26] for MEAD [45], which captures diverse speech and lip movement intensities. We use LRS3 in the first stage and LRS3-3D in the second stage to train our speech-mesh synchronized representation. Then, for base model training and evaluations, we adopt two configurations: (1) training and testing with VOCASET, in line with existing work, and (2)

Method	Temporal Synchronization	Lip Readability		Expressiveness
	MTM ($\downarrow$)	LVE ($\downarrow$)	PLRS ($\uparrow$)	SLCC / Δ ($\downarrow$)
VOCASET	-	-	0.409	0.34 / -
FaceFormer [11]	53.6	3.357	0.368	0.26 / 0.08
+ Ours rep.	52.2	3.091	0.463	0.37 / 0.03
CodeTalker [46]	61.8	3.700	0.381	0.38 / 0.04
+ Ours rep.	60.9	3.579	0.388	0.35 / 0.01
SelfTalk [21]	50.1	2.971	0.414	0.41 / 0.07
+ Ours rep.	49.2	2.924	0.418	0.35 / 0.01

Table 2. Quantitative results of lip synchronization on VOCASET [8] test set. We evaluate the base models on our proposed lip synchronization metrics. We denote Δ as the difference in SLCC between the model and those measured on the data distribution. A lower Δ indicates the model more closely represents the intensity correlation of the dataset. We demonstrate the effectiveness of our representation in consistently enhancing all three aspects of lip synchronization.

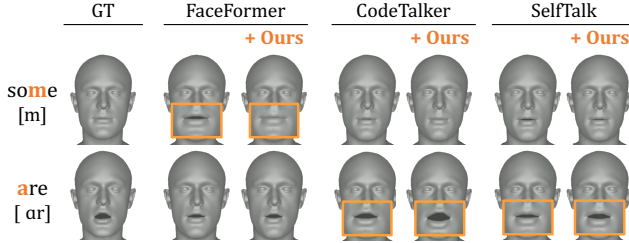


Figure 3. Qualitative results of the effectiveness of our perceptual loss for lip readability. Our perceptual loss guides base-lines [11, 21, 46] to generate perceptually accurate lip movements.

combining MEAD-3D with VOCASET during training to endow expressiveness and testing on MEAD-3D.

Base methods. We use three state-of-the-art 3D talking head generation models [11, 21, 46] to evaluate the effectiveness of our perceptual loss.

Metrics. To comprehensively evaluate the three aspects of lip synchronization, we assess MTM, PLRS, and SLCC, corresponding to temporal synchronization, lip readability, and expressiveness, respectively. Additionally, we compute the level-wise SLCC for the MEAD-3D test set, which includes three distinct emotional intensity levels, to evaluate the expressive capability of 3D talking head generation models. We also measure LVE as part of the lip readability evaluation.

6.2. Experimental Results and Analysis

We conduct evaluations to assess the effectiveness of our speech-mesh synchronized representation and the incorporation of an expressive speech-3D face mesh paired dataset (*i.e.*, MEAD-3D) in enhancing the three criteria.

How well do existing 3D talking head models achieve lip synchronization in all three aspects? The results are summarized in Table 2. For temporal synchronization, most base models achieve MTM values between 50 and 60ms, indicating performance close to the acceptable asynchrony

Method	Perceptual Loss	Temporal Synchronization	Lip Readability		Expressiveness
		MTM ($\downarrow$)	LVE ($\downarrow$)	PLRS ($\uparrow$)	SLCC / Δ ($\downarrow$)
VOCASET	-	-	-	0.409	0.34 / -
FaceFormer [11]	$\times$	53.6	3.357	0.368	0.26 / 0.08
	3D SyncNet	55.6	3.316	0.435	0.38 / 0.04
	Ours w/o 2D prior	55.3	3.278	0.400	0.42 / 0.08
	Ours w/ 2D prior	52.2	3.091	0.463	0.37 / 0.03
CodeTalker [46]	$\times$	61.8	3.700	0.381	0.38 / 0.04
	3D SyncNet	59.6	4.319	0.379	0.14 / 0.20
	Ours w/o 2D prior	55.9	3.579	0.374	0.23 / 0.11
	Ours w/ 2D prior	60.9	3.579	0.388	0.35 / 0.01
SelfTalk [21]	$\times$	50.1	2.971	0.414	0.41 / 0.07
	3D SyncNet	49.5	2.941	0.405	0.35 / 0.01
	Ours w/o 2D prior	54.4	3.149	0.417	0.39 / 0.05
	Ours w/ 2D prior	49.2	2.924	0.418	0.35 / 0.01

Table 3. Ablation study on architectural choice and 2D prior knowledge. We validate the effectiveness of the transformer-based architecture and curriculum learning with a pre-trained 2D speech representation by ablating them from our proposed representation.

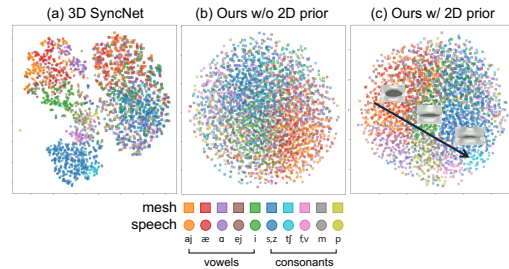


Figure 4. t-SNE plot of ablation study. We plot the t-SNE graph for each perceptual critic model. We represent the features with same phoneme as same color. Squared and circled points denote mesh and speech features from each representation, respectively.

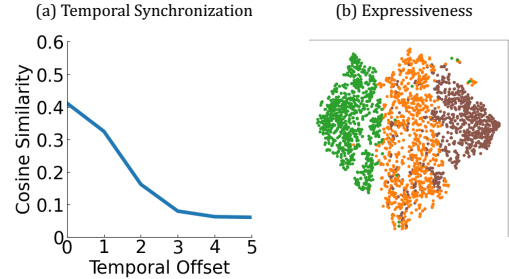


Figure 5. Behaviors of our representation in temporal and expressiveness sensitivity. We demonstrate the effectiveness of our representation in temporal synchronization and expressiveness using a cosine similarity graph and speech feature plots, respectively. We color the point as **low**, **medium**, and **high** intensity.

threshold. Regarding lip readability, SelfTalk [21] achieves the best performance, while FaceFormer [11] has the lowest PLRS score. Furthermore, CodeTalker [46] demonstrates the closest SLCC values to the ground truth VOCASET mesh, while FaceFormer exhibits the highest SLCC discrepancy.

Does our speech-mesh representation improve lip synchronization? Yes. Table 2 and Fig. 3 show consistent improvements in the three aspects with our perceptual loss.

What makes our speech-mesh representation have lip synchronization ability? We hypothesize that the transformer-based architecture and curriculum learning with a pre-trained

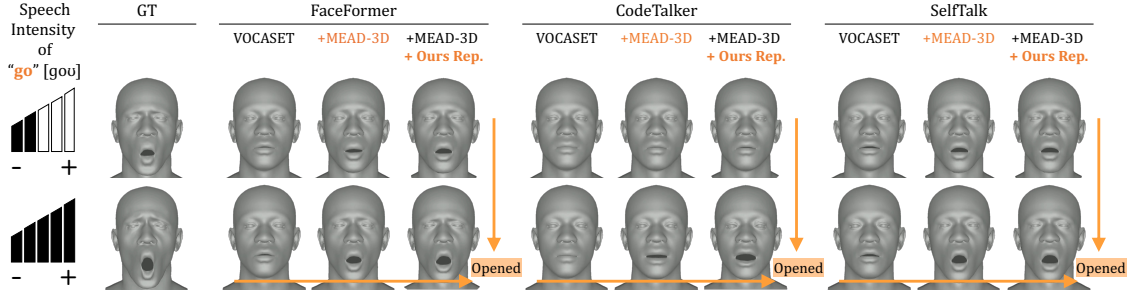


Figure 6. Qualitative results for the expressiveness. Given high and low intensity levels of speech, models trained on both MEAD-3D and VOCASET show more expressive lip movements compared to those trained on VOCASET alone, and even better with our perceptual loss.

audio-visual speech representation contribute significantly to improved lip synchronization. To validate this, we conduct ablation studies, summarized in Table 3, examining the roles of pre-trained speech representation and architectural design. Without the pre-trained speech representation, base models show lower performance across metrics, and CNN-based architectures, 3D SyncNet, do not clearly show effectiveness, while ours with 2D prior consistently show improvement. The t-SNE plots of perceptual critic models in Fig. 4 show that, in (a) 3D SyncNet, speech and mesh features corresponding to the same phoneme group are separated. In (b) ours without 2D priors, speech and mesh features lack separation and appear scattered without clustering. Our representation (c), notably, tends to form more distinct clusters according to phonemes, with vowels and consonants grouped closely, potentially contributing to enhancing lip readability. We also observe a directional progression in the feature space, shifting from phonemes with mouth opening (e.g., /aj/) to those with mouth closing (e.g., /f/).

We also examine our representation’s performance in other aspects, temporal synchronization and expressiveness. Figure 5-(a) demonstrates temporal sensitivity, as cosine similarity drops when temporal misalignment is introduced between input speech and 3D face mesh. In Fig. 5-(b), we plot speech features at varying speech intensities, showing a directional trend as intensity increases from lowest to highest. Figures 4 and 5 imply that our representation holds favorable properties discussed in Fig. 1 for the three criteria.

Can we unlock the expressive power of 3D talking heads?

Likely. Since VOCASET [8] lacks the range of diverse speech and lip movement intensities, evaluating expressive power requires testing on a dataset with a broader range of intensities. To study this, we examine the expressiveness of the base models on the MEAD-3D dataset, which includes three intensity levels. We assess SLCC at each intensity level to evaluate expressiveness and identify any expressiveness bounds as the level of intensity increases. We first test the base models trained on VOCASET [8] against the MEAD-3D test set. Table 4 shows these models demonstrate limited expressiveness, with SLCC values showing minimal increase across intensity levels. We hypothesize that

Method	Temporal Synchronization	Lip Readability		Expressiveness			
		MTM ($\downarrow$)	LVE ($\downarrow$)	PLRS ($\uparrow$)	Lv1	Lv2	Lv3
MEAD-3D	-	-	0.230	0.24 / -	0.30 / -	0.39 / -	0.42 / -
FaceFormer [11]	59.6	3.207	0.299	0.08 / 0.16	0.07 / 0.23	0.07 / 0.32	0.06 / 0.36
+ MEAD-3D	59.5	1.139	0.176	0.26 / 0.02	0.30 / 0.00	0.34 / 0.05	0.35 / 0.07
+ Ours rep.	55.8	1.114	0.306	0.27 / 0.03	0.27 / 0.03	0.32 / 0.07	0.33 / 0.09
CodeTalker [46]	60.7	3.236	0.294	0.02 / 0.22	0.03 / 0.27	0.03 / 0.36	0.02 / 0.40
+ MEAD-3D	60.9	2.954	0.154	0.09 / 0.15	0.12 / 0.18	0.06 / 0.33	0.11 / 0.31
+ Ours rep.	58.6	2.705	0.221	0.18 / 0.06	0.29 / 0.01	0.31 / 0.08	0.31 / 0.11
SelfTalk [21]	53.4	3.396	0.294	0.14 / 0.10	0.14 / 0.16	0.17 / 0.22	0.15 / 0.27
+ MEAD-3D	54.2	1.238	0.216	0.16 / 0.08	0.28 / 0.02	0.32 / 0.07	0.31 / 0.11
+ Ours rep.	52.7	1.192	0.230	0.17 / 0.07	0.29 / 0.01	0.34 / 0.05	0.33 / 0.09

Table 4. Quantitative results of lip synchronization on MEAD-3D test set. We evaluate the base models on the MEAD-3D test set. We also compute the level-wise SLCC to evaluate the expressive capability of the models.

this limitation arises, because VOCASET’s smaller scale and intensity range restrict the model’s ability to learn relationships between speech and lip intensity. To address this, we integrate MEAD-3D with VOCASET for training, aiming to boost expressiveness in the base models. This approach consistently improves SLCC across all intensity levels. However, simply adding MEAD-3D degrades lip synchronization metrics, except for expressiveness, *i.e.*, non-trivial. To counterbalance this, we leverage our perceptual loss, which effectively mitigates the degradation introduced by MEAD-3D while improving expressiveness (see Fig. 6).

7. Conclusion

This paper addresses challenges in existing 3D talking head generation models, which often overlook the true correspondence between speech and lip movements, making it difficult to accurately link lip movements with varying speech characteristics. To overcome this issue, we identify three essential aspects—Temporal Synchronization, Lip Readability, and Expressiveness—that influence the perceptual quality of lip movements, and develop specific metrics for each aspect. We introduce a speech-mesh synchronized representation that exhibits these emergent properties and adopt it as a perceptual loss. Our extensive analyses demonstrate that our perceptual loss consistently enhances models across three aspects. We believe that our defined aspects will guide future research in generating more realistic 3D talking heads, and our representation will serve as a key component.

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